

Choosing the Right Design Professional for Your Home Project



Architects • Builders • Designers

A simple guide for homeowners

What Homeowners Want to Know	Licensed Architect	Builder / Contractor with in-house designer	Residential or Interior Designer (Unlicensed)
Main job	Plans the home or addition and makes sure it's safe and meets codes	Builds the project and manages the work	Drafting Service with limited design
Formal Training ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Degree (5 or 6 years) in Architecture Minimum 3 Year Internship 	✗ None required	✗ None required
Certification/licensure ²	✔ Licensed by the state (required) to protect owner's interests	✗ None	✗ None
Who do they represent?	Works directly for the owner as the owner's agent	Works for the Builder to ensure the builder can start the project quicker	Often works for a lumberyard as a sales tool for selling building materials. Often works under the direction of the builder
When they're involved	At the beginning, prior to selecting a builder, throughout the design, permitting, and construction process	When the builder is under contract	When an agreement is made to purchase materials
What you receive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A thorough design process to assure every issue has been considered Fully Detailed Construction Drawings to ensure tighter bidding and smooth construction process Assistance in selecting a builder Construction observation to ensure plans are followed correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (oftentimes) a hasty design process as the builder already has the project scheduled Minimal Construction Drawings adequate for permitting, yet leaving many decisions to be made in the field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (oftentimes) a hasty design process as the builder already has the project scheduled Minimal Construction Drawings adequate for permitting, yet leaving many decisions to be made in the field
Are they Professionally Liable for your project?	✔ Yes – Architect's carry Professional Liability Insurance	✗ No – Homeowner is liable for what is on the permit plans	✗ No – Homeowner is liable for what is on the permit plans
Can design the structure?	✔ Yes	✗ No	✗ No
Can get permits approved?	✔ Yes	♦ Sometimes	♦ Sometimes
Knowledge of Building Codes	✔ Yes	♦ Limited	♦ Limited
Able to competitively bid your project ³	✔ Yes	✗ No	✗ No

¹ Professional Architecture degree programs include coursework in: Design Theory, Esthetic Theory, Architectural Design Studio, Architectural History, Construction Materials & Methods, Mechanical Systems, Structural Systems, and Professional Practice

² Upon qualify and passing a rigorous examination, Architects are licensed to protect the Health, Safety, and Welfare of the public. One cannot refer to themselves as an "architect" without a license.

³ Oftentimes the Architect's fee will be absorbed in the difference between the high and low Bids. In this sense, the Architect's fee pays for itself.